

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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June 20, 2017
Start: 11:57 a.m.
Recess: 12:03 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,
14th Fl.

B E F O R E:
STEPHEN T. LEVIN
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Annabel Palma
Fernando Cabrera
Ruben Wills
Vanessa L. Gibson
Corey D. Johnson
Ritchie J. Torres
Barry S. Grodenchik
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

[sound check]

[pause]

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning

everybody. I'm Council Member Stephen Levin, chair of the City Council General Welfare Committee. This morning we're going to be -- just doing my best Greenfield impression. Alright, this morning we are going to be [laughter] going to vote on two pieces of legislation intended to increase the amount of transparency and information available on essential services in the DHS shelter system -- Proposed Intro 929-A, sponsored by Council Member Johnson, in relation to requiring information on medical health services in shelters and Intro 932-A, which I have sponsored in relation to requiring information on mental health services in shelters.

Last November this committee held a two-part hearing to discuss the medial and mental health needs of the adults and children living in the DHS shelter system and those living on the street. At those hearing we discussed with the Administration, health care providers, shelter providers, and advocates about the significant health and mental

1 health needs of adults and children living in the
2 shelters and sleeping on the street, in safe havens,
3 and in drop-in centers. At those hearings we heard
4 how services are not provided uniformly across the
5 system, and depending on where an individual or
6 family is placed, their level of service may range
7 from full on-site clinic to simply a referral to an
8 off-site provider.
9

10 Intro 932, along with Intro 929, will
11 provide the policymakers, advocates, health care
12 professionals, and the public with critical
13 information about the services we are providing to a
14 population that has experienced significant trauma.
15 The bills would include information on the types of
16 mental health services that are available across the
17 system, the most common mental health issues among
18 both children and families in the shelter system, and
19 the services provided to those individuals living on
20 the street.

21 While these bills are only a first step
22 in understanding the scope of this issue and more
23 work is needed to improve the system, it is critical
24 that we understand what our system is doing to meet
25

1
2 the needs of the 60,000 individuals that are served
3 each night.

4 And so I'd like to thank the staff of the
5 General Welfare Committee -- Andrea Vazquez, Senior
6 Counsel; Tonya Cyrus, Senior Policy Analyst; Finance
7 Analyst Nameera Nuzhat; and **[inaudible]** Ward, Legal
8 Fellow -- for working on this legislation, as well as
9 Dohini Sompura, the Unit Head. I'd also like to
10 thank my Chief of Staff, Jonathan Boucher and Budget
11 Director Ed Paulino, and now I'd like to turn it over
12 to my colleague Corey Johnson to say a few words
13 about the bill that he is sponsoring.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you,
15 Mr. Chair. Homelessness is one of the most pressing
16 and heartbreaking issues of our time; the crisis
17 we're facing with over 60,000 people sleeping in our
18 shelter system, 24,000 of whom are children, requires
19 us to address both the short-term problems we face on
20 a daily basis and the larger systematic issues behind
21 them.

22 The need for this legislation arises from
23 the startling lack of data regarding the health needs
24 of our city's homeless population and the services
25 available to them. It's impossible to address the

1 health issues facing our most vulnerable citizens if
2 we don't know what those issues are and the current
3 efforts we're undertaking to address them. If we're
4 gonna do right by this population and address
5 homelessness, we need a better understanding of the
6 services currently available and where there may be
7 gaps. With the passage of this bill we will have the
8 information necessary to identify and supplement
9 lacking services as well as address the systematic
10 issues that exacerbate the most frequent chronic
11 conditions homeless individuals face. This
12 information includes the number of shelters with on-
13 site services, the health services available at
14 intake facilities, and the availability of health
15 services to the unsheltered population. We have a
16 responsibility to safeguard the health and safety of
17 our most vulnerable New Yorkers; that is a promise
18 our city made to these folks and that is a promise
19 that we will keep. This legislation is an important
20 step in this endeavor.

21
22 I'd like to thank my good friend and the
23 chair of this Committee, General Welfare Chair Steve
24 Levin for his leadership and for us doing this
25 package of bills together, and my colleagues who were

1
2 in support of this legislation and all the advocates
3 who worked tirelessly on behalf of our most
4 vulnerable populations. I also want to thank Louis
5 Cholden-Brown, my Deputy Chief of Staff and Andrea
6 Vazquez, the Committee Counsel to the General Welfare
7 Committee. And with that, I ask my colleagues to
8 please vote in favor of this legislation. Thank you,
9 Mr. Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council
11 Member Johnson. Any of my other colleagues have
12 anything they want to add to this? [background
13 comment] Okay. And with that, I will ask the clerk
14 to call the vote. Thank you very much.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Committee Clerk Matthew
16 DeStefano, Committee on General Welfare, roll call on
17 Intro Nos. 929-A and 932-A. Chair Levin.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I vote aye on both.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Cabrera.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Wills.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: I vote aye.

23 Congratulations to my colleagues.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK: Johnson.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: I vote aye.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Salamanca.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Aye on all.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of 5 in the
5 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
6 the items have been adopted.

7 [pause]

8 [background comments]

9 [pause]

10 COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation of roll
11 call, Committee on General Welfare, roll call on
12 Intro Nos. 929-A and 932-A. Council Member Torres.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I vote aye on
14 all, and I vote for Steve Levin.

15 [background comment]

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: The vote now stands at
17 6 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative; no
18 abstentions.

19 [background comment]

20 [pause]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, with that, at
22 12:03 p.m., this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

23 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date July 12, 2017